

Massachusetts High School Students and Sexual Orientation

Results of the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS) is conducted every two years by the Massachusetts Department of Education with funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey monitors behaviors of high school students that are related to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults in the United States.

The 2003 MYRBS was conducted in 50 randomly selected public high schools. In total, 3624 students in grades 9 - 12 participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. Because of the high student and school response rates, the results of this survey can be generalized to apply to public high school students across Massachusetts.

Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students

The MYRBS found that:

- 3.5 percent of students surveyed described themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- 6.0 percent of all students described themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual and/or reported same-sex sexual contact.

Students at Risk

Students who described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were significantly more likely than their peers to report attacks, suicide attempts and drug and alcohol use. When compared to peers, this group was:

- **over five times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year**
- **over three times more likely to miss school in the past month because of feeling unsafe**
- **over three times more likely to have been injured or threatened with a weapon at school**

Reported Behaviors	GLB Students*	Other Students
Attempted suicide in the past year	40.4	7.2
Required medical attention as a result of a suicide attempt	18.3	2.2
Skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe on route to or at school	16.3	4.2
Was threatened/injured with a weapon at school in the past year	19.2	5.8
Was In a physical fight resulting in treatment by doctor or nurse	13.3	3.4

**All differences between GLB students and Others are statistically significant, $p < .05$.*